



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services

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For Immediate Release

Recognize and Prevent Elder Abuse

(Madison – September 23, 2005) The Department of Health and Family Services urges people to learn the warning signs of elder abuse and to report any suspected abusive activity to their county elder abuse agency.

"It is intolerable that older persons are abused – whether by a family member, a caretaker, or a stranger. We must all work to help ensure the health and safety of our seniors," said Judith Frye, Disability and Elder Services. "If you witness abusive behavior or suspect something is wrong – report your concerns to the authorities."

Elder abuse can be physical, material, or emotional. Warning signs include:

- Vague explanations given to account for fractures, welts, bruises and burns
- Lack of knowledge concerning finances or inability to explain loss of assets
- Caregiver's neglect that results in significant danger to an older person in his/her care
- Malnutrition, dehydration, excessive dirt or odors
- Agitation, anxiety or panic attacks

To report suspected elder abuse, call the Elder Abuse Helpline in your county. Be prepared to report what happened, when and where it happened, and who the suspected abuser might be. Callers can remain anonymous.

In 2004, the Department launched a statewide public information campaign to promote greater awareness of elder abuse, to provide information about care alternatives for the victim, and to increase the reporting of incidents of elder abuse.

A total of 3,937 suspected cases of abuse were reported statewide in 2004, including 17 fatalities. Of the incidents investigated, 320 situations were considered life threatening.

For more information, including a list of the county elder abuse agencies and Helplines, visit:

<http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/aging/elderabuse/index.htm>

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